

REMARKS

Claims 14-43 remain in the application. Claims 18-20, 27-27, and 41-43 stand allowed. Claims 14-17, 21, 22, 25, 26, 38, and 40 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Kudo et al (U.S. Patent 5,657,186). Claim 23 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kudo et al in view of Arya et al (U.S. Patent 6,055,132). Claim 24 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kudo et al in view of well-known art. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of the claims of the present invention for the following reasons.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the assertion that Kudo, et al discloses all of the elements included in claim 14. Applicants understanding of Kudo, et al is that the element pointed out as an interconnect module, the “flexible wiring substrate 32,” is a member of the suspension 30 containing the suspension leads and connecting ends 33a - 33d therein. This relationship can be seen from the description presented in the Abstract of Kudo (lines 8-9) where it states that the wiring substrate (32) is *formed* (emphasis added) on the support member 30 (see also Figure 3 of Kudo). Thus, the wiring substrate 32 is part of the suspension 30, and is not a separate interconnect module.

Additionally, Claim 14 requires that the interconnect module couple the connecting end of the suspension with the connecting end of the slider/head. Because the connecting ends 33a - 33d of the slider are formed within the flexible wiring substrate 32, the flexible wiring substrate 32 does not couple the connecting ends 33a - 33d with the connecting ends of the slider/head.

Applicants also respectfully disagree with the assertion that the flexible wiring substrate 32 matches the claim 14 limitation of routing one or more data signals between said electrically conductive paths and said slider/head assembly. Indeed, applicants assert that the flexible wiring

substrate 32 electrically connects only to the “lead wires” 79 and not to the slider/head assembly (76). Therefore, the flexible wiring substrate does not route one or more data signals *between* the identified electrically conductive paths (79) and the slider/head assembly (76).

The Office Action also asserts that the flexible wiring substrate 32 couples the connecting ends of the suspension (30) and said slider/head assembly (76) such that the connecting end of the suspension is positioned in a first direction and the connecting end of the slider/head is positioned in a second direction. Applicants respectfully disagree with this assertion. While the wires connected to the connectors 78a - 78d may route upward, the connectors 78a - 78d themselves face the connectors 33a - 33d and are oriented along the same horizontal axis as the connectors 33a - 33d. Thus, the connecting ends 78a-d and the connecting ends 33a - 33d are not positioned in first and second directions, as recited by claim 14.

Applicants have presented several clear distinctions between Kudo and the limitations of claim 14. Because each and every element of claim 14 is not found in Kudo as required for a *prima facie* case under 35 U.S.C. 102, claim 14 and claims 15-17, and 38, which depend from claim 14. are distinguished over the art of record and are in condition for allowance.

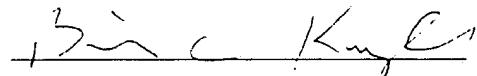
Regarding independent claim 21, applicants assert that the essence of the arguments presented in relation to claim 14 apply to claim 21 as well. In particular, applicants disagree with the assertion that the flexible wiring substrate 32 is an interconnect module that couples the connecting ends of the first and second devices. Applicants assert that the flexible wiring substrate 32 does not couple (physically or otherwise) the signal electrodes 33a, 33b, 33c, 33d (column 4 lines 49-50) and the signal terminals 78a, 78b, 78c, 78d (column 5 lines 56-58). Applicants also assert that the only interconnection or coupling between the signal electrodes 33a, 33b, 33c, 33d and signal

terminals 78a, 78b, 78c, 78d is the electrically conductivity provide by the lead wires 79. As stated earlier, the lead wires 79 clearly are not part of, nor do they comprise an interconnect module. Applicants asserts that the stated arguments place independent claim 21 and claims 22, 23, and 40 which depend therefrom in condition for allowance.

Regarding independent claim 24, applicants assert that the limitations of claim 14 are included in claim 24. Applicants request that the arguments presented relative to claim 14 also be directed to claim 24. Applicants assert that the stated arguments place independent claim 24 and dependent claims 25 and 26 in condition for allowance.

Applicants assert that claims 14-43 are in condition for prompt allowance. If any impediments to the prompt allowance of the claims that remain can be resolved by a telephone conversation, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian C. Kunzler
Reg. No. 38,527
Attorney for Applicant

Date: February 4, 2002
10 West 100 South
Suite 425
Salt Lake City, UT 84101
Telephone (801) 994-4646
Fax (801) 322-1054